



Are Two Heads Better Than One?

What's the issue?

The Navy preaches the use of the buddy system to keep Sailors out of trouble while on liberty in foreign ports. It's also highly recommended for stateside Sailors who are headed out on the town, or to the beach, or to participate in any number of off-duty activities. After all, two heads are better than one, right?

What's going on?

- In fiscal year 2008, 21 Sailors died in off-duty, recreational mishaps. This is the second leading killer of Sailors. Only motor vehicle crashes take more lives.
- The buddy system is designed to ensure there's a voice of reason when one person decides to do something dumb. Too often, it leads to a mob mentality where buddies challenge one another to take greater risks than they would ever take on their own.

For instance, two Sailors from a Norfolk-based destroyer were hanging out on the beach at two a.m. and decided to swim several miles to an Army fort they could see off in the distance. A third Sailor drove over to pick them up. When they didn't show, the Coast Guard was called and eventually the two swimmers were found exhausted, but alive, washed up on a manmade island about halfway across. They were lucky, but would either of them have attempted this feat alone in the middle of the night? This is just one instance of checks and balances gone awry.

What's the solution?

- Too many Sailors treat the buddy system as an opportunity to party harder rather than smarter.
- Sailors must think about their responsibility to one another.
- Remember that the goal of the buddy system is to provide a voice of reason, not to egg each other on or show off.
- Confront issues that arise when your buddy isn't up to the job. Do your part and demand that others do their part as well.
- Have a plan and specify some limits. Avoid having to rethink things *after* you've been drinking.

Discussion Items and Open Questions

1. What are the qualities and attitudes you should consider when picking your "buddy" for the evening?
2. If your buddy is the designated driver and you find him or her taking shots of tequila and dancing on the bar, what do you do?
3. Why does the Navy recommend (and usually mandate) the buddy system for liberty in foreign ports?
4. How can we make the buddy system work better?

Supervisors: Use this page to guide safety discussions with your personnel